

Algonquin Petition
August 1847

As our good mother, across the big salt Lake has placed you in his chair, we herewith send you the paper, we were requested to prepare for him. It contains all we have to say in regard to the injuries and great injustices that have been done us, our mouths are not forked, Father, we speak straight and what we represent is the truth.

Father;

To make you thoroughly acquainted with the cause of our present most destitute and distressed situation we must go far back, and therefore entreat and pray of you to be patient and to listen to our words, and not only as a good Father Lord Metcalfe - Just - that you show no partiality that you render justice to whom it appertains. Justice Father is all we ask it is what we are entitled to and expect at your hands.

Father;

As you are to us a stranger and perhaps ignorant of our claim, as regards our rights permit your children, Algonquins and Nippissings, to point out to you the extent of the Hunting Grounds reserved to their Tribe, by the father of our ancestors the King of France and which they occupied and enjoyed long before the conquest of Canada, begins at Point D, Orignal, above the long Sault on the Ottawa River, and following up that River to Mattawa thence up the little the little river to the banks of lake nippisiinque embracing both banks of the Ottawa Its islands and adjacent countries, tributary streams, rivers and brooks from there sources and heights of the land that flow and empty themselves in said Ottawa River.

And more over Father the said hunting ground were reserved to our Tribes by a proclamation signed by our late good and lamented Father King George the third - dated 7th October 1763 and by his order, the late Sir William Johnson Chief Superintendent of all his Indians in North America, assembled the principal Chiefs and warriors of our tribes in Council and was pleased to appoint one of his officers, (his representative) to address the Council as we have always been given to understand by our Father and Old Chiefs the following words.

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Address "My children Algonquins and Nippissing, By command of your Father and Chief Superintendent Sir William Johnson, I have assembled you in Council to make your hands dance with joy in announcing you that your new Father King George the third across the big salt bill Lake has the interest of his Red Children at heart he has not forgotten them as he is persuaded that should he at any time require their services, they will be prompt to obey him. The hunting grounds, my children which your ancestors and yourselves have from times immemorial occupied and enjoyed and that have been the means of supporting and bringing up your families were reserved to you as herebefore by order of your Great and Lord Father the King.

No strangers my children, have a right to establish themselves on your hunting grounds nor molest you in any manner whatever. They are reserved to your Tribe as hunting grounds for the sole benefit of yourselves and children your Great Father even forbid his first officer or any, other individual of making a survey of any part thereof or to purchase or otherwise to appropriate to themselves a single particle of your hunting grounds.

Should my Children at a future period find that your hunting grounds become ruined and exhausted of Beaver peltires etc, etc and that you might be willing to dispose of a part or the whole of your hunting grounds they will be assumed by your Great Father the King and his Representatives that may at the time be with you and the purchase is to take place at a public council to be held for that purpose at which your Chief and Principal Warriors must be present to act in concert with your Fathers Representatives and such of his officers as he may appoint to act with him and whatever arrangement may be mutually resolved upon at said council and sanctioned by both parties will be approved of in the name of the King; your Great Father by his Representatives whom will give orders for the payment of such parts of your hunting grounds as may have assumed by Government conformunity to the resolves and arrangements of the council God Save The King.

My Children;

Here is true copy of the writing which you Great Father the King has transmitted to your Chief Superintendent Sir William Johnston it is certified by him dated 24 December 1763, My order are to place it in your hands. Be careful of it, It may at a future period be of service to you.....

Father;

We hold this writing, our ancestors and ourselves, were proud of it. We considered it as a sacred document, it contains the words of our late Father King George the Third, and as we were always give to understand, we were persuaded that his words and signature were sufficient to ensure us of the peaceful enjoyment of our hunting grounds and keep us from the being molested by strangers of any description. This being the case, Father it was thought necessary and advisable by our Old chief and principal warriors to prevent quarrels and bloodshed with our Indian Brothers to assemble a grand council to which was invited to attend the principal Chiefs and Warriors of the Tribes then inhabiting the North Banks of the St.Lawrence facing Point D'Orignal and from thence up towards to a parallel of Lake Nippissinques. Iroquois, Mississaguai and etc. and the hunting grounds claimed and reserved and enjoyed by the tribes of the St.Lawrence embraced the countries, Rivers, Lakes, Tributaries, Streams following and emptying themselves in said river St. Lawrence from the heights of land separating the waters that flow from said heights of lands in the River Ottawa which country and tributary streams are as above mentioned. The portions of hunting grounds reserved to your children the Algonquins and Nippissinques on the South banks of the Ottawa River, this point being amicably settled at said council it was Unanimously resolved and agreed upon that us individuals of either Tribe should on any account whatever encroach on the Hunting Grounds of the other under a certain penalty for which the Chiefs of the [] Tribes were amenable.

Father;

The limits and extent of the hunting grounds reserved to the Algonquins and Nippissinques and them, reserved to our Brethren then inhabiting the North bank of the River St.Lawrence being amicably settle at the above mentioned council as explained it was further thought advisable by our old Chiefs and principal warriors to prvent quarrels and dissentions among ourselves that the whole of our hunting grounds reserved to us as above explained should be divided into two parts as equally as possible according to their different situations abounding in furs, and part to be enjoyed by the Algonquin tribe, and the other for the benefit of the Nippissinques the part or proportion allotted to each Tribe to be by their Chiefs and principal warriors having a band or clan might have a

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certain extent of hunting grounds in proportion to the number of the band and followers, this arrangement having been settled to the satisfaction of the whole with a stipulation that no individual of one band should encroach on the portion of the hunting grounds belonging to another to hunt beavers or peltries. But Should a deer start from the hunting grounds of the band to go to that of another the hunter was liberty to allow it.

By this arrangement Father say various Chiefs or head of bands had an opportunity of nursing their Beavers and others in the following manners viz; by dividing the portion belonging to the band into two equal parts which were still very extensive and hunting and changing alternability every two or three years from one part to the other which was generally adopted.

Father;

These two points between our known Brethren and ourselves being settled and holding the above mentioned writing signed by our lamented Father King George the Third (in which we placed the greatest confidence wherein it is stipulated that we are assured of the protection of the Government your children were happy and persuaded that they could never be molested by strangers with impunity having the Representative of their Father the King as a Protector.

But Father;

It is with tears and sore heart that your Your Red children Algonquins and Nippissingues are under the necessity of telling you that to their great surprise, detriment and ruin that it is far from being the case, but at the same time they are persuaded that it ought to be.

Father;

Permit - your Children to represent to you that about fifty years ago or there, about there was not a single white mans establishment above the long Sault with the exemption of two or three huts of Canadians for Traders and these were not permitted to come without leave of Government. In those days Father we were happy, rich and independent, we lived well, more great hunts and had abundance of good clothing - our hunting grounds were much more rich in valuable furs

and our magnificent forests are well stacked with Deer and game and other species. No one in those days Father dared fight against us. It is only about the beginning of this century Father, that a few indigent poor families who were starving and (as you children, Algonquins and Nippissingue who placed more confidence in their Indian Brethren for assistance than they did in their white brethren) found their way up the Long Sault; our Chiefs took pity on them, fed them, allowed a piece of land on our hunting grounds to cultivate and support there families for which they were grateful and thankful,

But Father;

These interlopers some years afterwards began to increase annually, we perceived they would be an annoyance to us...but before making use of force to expel them we complained to our Father and Superintendent Sir William Johnston, he promised, to send them away, but did not do so since that time Father innumerable memorials have been sent by us with complaints praying for the removal of these squatters and lumberers from our hunting grounds, and always received good words, and great promises from your predecessors, and were told that steps, would be immediately taken to remove and punish them, But Father, there were out promises and light that they were blown away by the first little wind, and of course remain to be accomplished.

Father;

We your Red Children Algonquins and Nippissingue are the true and identical Children of the said, and according to the above mentioned Proclamation of our lamented good Father King George the Third, the sole proprietor of these once rich hunting grounds and majestic forests but at the present day Father your Children are reduced to begging caused principally by the innumerable squatters and lumberers, who not content of taking possession and establishing themselves on the most fertile parts of our hunting grounds destroying our magnificent forests and appropriating to themselves our fine timber but they most maliciously set fire to our woods, by which means they have destroyed our Beaver and petries, and driven away our deer. The only dependence we had to support, cloth and bring up our children.

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We are often ill treated by these interlopers and they take pleasure in destroying our patches of maize which we have here and there, in cultivation for our winter stock, and pillage and destroy our sugar bushes, and when we threaten them with complaints to our Father, they laugh at us and say it is from him they receive licenses to cut our best timber. We are too weak Father to defend ourselves and obliged to put up with these injuries and injustices.

Who Father is the cause of all we endured for the many years past and are this day reduced to the greatest distress?

It is with a sore heart we say It is the Government who furnishes licenses to these lumberers, and who connive with those squatters, who take possessions of parts of our most valuable hunting grounds without our permission or authority from Government, and who owe us much money the formally used to pay us a small sum of money for the use of the land the squatted on, but now refuse to do so, saying that they are forbid by Government.

Who Father, has established and is still establishing those numerous and flourishing townships on our hunting grounds on the Ottawa River. It is Government takers-that same government which instead of protecting and assisting us in conformity to the above mentioned proclamation is the principal cause our principal great distress.

Father;

At the beginning of the revolutionary war with the big Knives (Americans) our Great Father the King required the assistance his Red Children the Algonquins and Nippissingues. Our ancestors were told his their representative that we were called upon as allies of our Great Father to encounter the enemy that we had the Honor to defend our lands and families, Father and must act in concert with our white Brethren we were no sooner summoned then the war whoop reiterated in our camp we remembered, what our Great Father the King had done for us and ancestors, we fought and bled for our Father and Country, we did the same in the last war with the big knives, and in a similar case we are ready to do it again.

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Father;

All of the above mentioned grievances and great injustices that we have experienced without being able to get redress were heaped upon us, before we had the good fortune of having your predecessor Lord Metclafe for a Protector - he promised to render us justice. It is at his request as before mentioned that this document was prepared as he has suddenly and unexpectedly been taken from us by the great Master of Life. We at the present day have no one but you to look up to for protection, we beseech you Father to watch over your Red Children; protect them as a good parent and order and see that justice be rendered them. Enough Father, let the past be forgotten and rather please see what is to be done for the future.

Father;

We pray and beseech you

First to have reference to the enclosed copy of a Report of the Executive Council of Lower Canada of the 13th June 1837. That report Father was sent across the Big Salt Lake and approved and sanctioned by our good young Mother the Queen by our dispatch of the 22nd August 1838.

The Representations in that document, Father with respect to your Red Children the Algonquins and Nipissingues are but just and what they are entitled to, and if treated as therein represented they would be happy and once more rich and independent as in former times. We have held this paper Father for near ten years, always looking forward and expecting that something would cost up but as your Children have received no benefit from it -- the cause we imagine proceeds from the several and sudden changes and deaths of several of our Fathers, your predecessors and to the late distracted state of the country.

We are now at peace Father and we depend upon you to set all this to rights. You have the power and the means, and therefore pray and beseech you to act towards your Children according to this report which is sanctioned by our young Mother the Queen.

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Father;

We have to represent to you, that the Algonquins and Nippissingue, have frequently requested of Government to assume the whole of their hunting grounds (with the exception of sufficeint extent of country or Hunting Grounds for both the Tribes, to establish themselves with the said Government) to be treated in like manner as our brothers of Upper Canada have been in conformity to the above mentioned proclamation who receive a certain annuity for such part of their hunting grounds according to their extent that the Government have assumed our hunting grounds are extensive rich in soil and abound in majestic florests.

Father;

With respect to our demands we pray of you to be pleased to glance over several of our Petitions of the month of march 1840, August 1843 and of the month of June 1844. These documents contain all our Prayers and are in the hands of our officer Colonel Napier -

We request of you, Father, to pay particular attention to the one regarding Isle aux Allumettes, and respecting the monies due us, by the numerous squatters who have settled themselves upon that Island and are become rich and independent. Our Officer Colonel Napier has a nominal list of them as well as an account of the monies they owed us when we found it was impossible to obtain redress from Government to expell and unmove those trespassers we came to an arrangement with them and leased them the land they had squatted upon for the term of two or three years at the rate of one shilling per acre per annum, many used to pay us punctually, but since 1838 and 1839 they have refused to pay without we had some paper from Government to show them that would authorize us to receive payment.

Father;

Render us justice for that part of our hunting grounds situated in the part of the River Ottawa (which our Officer Colonel Napier can explain to you) having Isle aux Allumettes on the South Bank where, we meant to settle ourselves and had the sanction so doing, and as promised from you Father Sir John Colborne the then Governor of Upper Canada of assistance but the year after this [] on our Chiefs second visit to Toronto on the subject -

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To our great surprise and mortification we were given to understand that said part of our hunting grounds had been clandestinely sold to the Upper Canada Government by the Mississaugas who well know they belonged to us, and who nevertheless for these many years past and still receive an annuity for them, which annuity we are from henceforth entitled to receive and we are persuaded that our Father will agree with us and give his orders accordingly.

Father;

The annual accumulation of the vast revenues of the present and future flourishing townships established on our hunting grounds the rent and purchase money that government have a right to obtain from the numerous squatters, that established themselves on our said hunting grounds without authority and the annual vast sums of money that must and ought to be realized from the timber of our magnificent forests, ought surely to be much more than adequate to furnish a sufficient annuity to place your once rich children of the soil in the situations mentioned in the above report of the executive council (which was sanctioned the by our Great and good Queen, and also abundant means to settle them comfortably in some snug corner of their said hunting grounds to bring up and support their children with the assistance, and protection of Government, without the fear of being hereafter molested by strangers.

Father;

We will break your ears no longer, we are persuaded that when you have carefully examined over complaints, you will be convinced that we have received much ill treatment and injustice and that we have as much right as our White Brethren to demand and entitled to receive justice at your hands.

That the Great Master of Life may be pleased to give you health, long life and prosperity in all your undertakings is the prayer of your Red Children The Algonquins and Nippissingues

Reference: Archives du Seminaire de Saint-Sulpice, Montreal
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